



Vincent van Gogh





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JA

# VAN GOGH TREASURES

## . . . Come to Manitoba

On behalf of the Winnipeg Art Gallery Association I would like to express appreciation to all of our Manitoba people who have taken advantage of this unique opportunity to view this distinguished collection of original van Gogh paintings and drawings. This exhibition will be shown in three other Canadian Cities: Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto, thus assuring that as great a number of Canadians as possible will be able to enjoy this unique opportunity.

We are greatly indebted to the Queen and Government of the Netherlands for sending to Canada this van Gogh Collection which comes equally from the Collections of the Vincent van Gogh foundation and State museum the Köller-Muller, and to Professor A. M. Hammacher, the director of the museum, and to Mr. Vincent W. van Gogh, nephew of the Artist.

Our grateful thanks also go to Premier Roblin and the Government of Manitoba who generously lent us the space in the Norquay Building in which to hang the pictures and to conduct the lectures.

Before the end of the month there will have been upward of 50,000 people who have seen these pictures, many of them school children throughout the province. We are hopeful that this will stimulate many of you to continue your interest in our Manitoba Art Gallery and to form an impetus toward the building of a new Art Gallery building in the near future.

H. H. G. Moody, F.R.A.I.C., A.R.C.A.,  
President,  
Winnipeg Art Gallery Association.

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The Golden Boys are happy to have assisted the Art Gallery in bringing this exquisite van Gogh Art Exhibition to Manitoba. As this is being written the venture is almost assured of being operated without a deficit, and its artistic success has been acclaimed by those more qualified to judge, than the writer.

It has been a pleasure to work with the members of the Art Gallery, and we hope that some day soon our paths may again cross, working hand in hand for the development, and furtherance of culture in Manitoba.

Maitland Steinkopf, M.B.E., Q.C.,  
President,  
Manitoba Travel & Convention Association.

# Van Gogh Exhibition

SPONSORED IN MANITOBA

by

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and

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Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

December 30, 1960 - January 31, 1961



## Introduction

During his school days Vincent started drawing as so many youngsters do, mostly copying illustrations; neither he himself nor his surroundings had any inkling that he would go on with it. The first two years that he was professionally active he devoted himself to drawing only; then he started to paint. In The Hague he made a few attempts but the first important paintings originated at Nuenen. They are all very dark, culminating in the large canvas "The Potato eaters". In Antwerp they became somewhat lighter; in the museum he studied the portraits by Rubens, the great Flemish painter, and from him he acquired a brighter color scheme. The first paintings from Paris continue in the same darkish trend like "The shoes" (his own shoes). After he became familiar with impressionist paintings the black, brown and grey disappeared. In their stead he starts using bright colors, in the beginning applied with short touches. At the end of the Paris period these were replaced by wide brush strokes. Later on at Arles, in the south of France, he sometimes painted large surfaces in a single color (as in "The sunflowers"). At St. Rémy (not far from Arles) his palette became somewhat more subdued, to brighten up again in his last period (at Auvers-sur-Oise, near Paris).

In a letter to his youngest sister (letter W 14)<sup>1)</sup>, Vincent described how he admired the then modern paintings of the The Hague school (Israëls, the Maris brothers, Mauve, etc.). He remarks that these are very beautiful and clear paintings, especially the landscapes, mostly in greyish tones. When, however, these greys are replaced by the pure rainbow colors and when these are applied in such a way as to strengthen each other "then one comes anew to calmness and harmony". Color effects become more powerful when a painter puts the complementary colors near to one another (red-green, orange-blue, yellow-violet) or when he uses the three primary colors (red, yellow and blue) side by side. A stronger combination does not exist. "The yellow house" (his own house) and "The harvest", both from the Arles period, belong to Vincent's brightest paintings.

The subjects of Vincent's paintings do not change from the beginning to the end. He was very versatile though he wrote in one of his letters that his preference went out to portrait painting. However he was usually too short of money to pay for models and therefore he painted still lifes and landscapes. Of his portraits he wrote that he did his best to discover what is noble and dignified in his model and that he tried to depict. The people have open faces and strong, attractive expressions, though in daily life others might consider them as plain or commonplace. Of course a painter's vision differs from what a photograph might show.

The still lifes are always composed of simple objects of daily life and not of beautiful or precious antiques. They consist of baskets with potatoes, vases with flowers, cups and cans, pitchers and glasses, books, etc. The landscapes are never viewed from special spots which are frequented by tourists. They are fields, bushes and hills, always with signs of human activity, houses or figures. A rather bare foreground and details on the horizon with a large sweep of free sky often give a feeling of wide spaces. Everywhere Vincent painted or made a drawing of the view from his studio window. It is a great privilege and it makes one happy when one is able to see what is beautiful in the common things of one's surroundings.

There was a time when Vincent's health did not allow him to leave his room but nevertheless he went on painting (at St. Rémy). His brother Theo, the only one who admired his work and who supported him morally as well as financially, sent him reproductions of well-known paintings to challenge his attention. Vincent wrote that he would use these the way a musician presents the works of a composer; he would paint his own vision of the same composition. This is the origin of Vincent's Resurrection of Lazarus (fragment of an etching by Rembrandt), his Pietà (after Delacroix), and especially of a number of paintings of farm workers after the French

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<sup>1)</sup> See The complete letters of Vincent van Gogh, translated into English, published by the New York Graphic Society, Greenwich, Connecticut, 1958, 3 vols. with 200 facsimilae reproductions of sketches.

painter Jean-Francois Millet. Millet was at that time one of the few who painted these subjects; what Vincent painted is much stronger and more colorful than these originals. People at work were always one of his beloved subjects. He wrote to Theo that by studying very hard he tried to find what is required to represent someone in motion with a few lines. As people in motion stay in one attitude for only a fraction of a second, the painter must retain in his memory the details thereof. This requires a very great effort. Vincent's figures are always alive, not wooden puppets.

Vincent's drawings can be divided into several groups. There are in the first place a number of the signed; that means that he considered them finished works. There are others not signed but ranking on the same level; among these must be counted, for instance, the large figures at work of the Nuenen period. Others are studies for paintings, either for the whole or for details only. Then there are sketches for study purposes; the letters to Theo are often enlivened by illustrations of the paintings with which he was occupied. All Vincent's paintings and drawings have not only in common a grand composition but they also are full of details. These are so accurate that a loom or a drawbridge or a chair could be built according to one of Vincent's drawings.

The development of Vincent's vision on life may help to explain somewhat the appeal of his paintings to a varied and numerous public. During the 10 years before becoming a professional painter there was nothing to suggest the great power of creativity which he showed as an artist. Within 10 years he produced more than 800 paintings and an equal number of drawings. When at the age of 17 he entered the world he behaved as any other intelligent young man, rejoicing in everything new and interesting he saw. This did not last long; gradually he lost his pleasure in life and by and by withdrew completely into himself, letting elapse all chances of bettering his position. As happens in many such cases he put the blame for his failures on the outside world instead of looking into himself to find out their causes. Self-complaint and denying oneself everything that might make life somewhat more pleasant, are detrimental to creative work. Both are general human qualities of which one has to beware, for once active they have the tendency of growing, even beyond control; Vincent was no exception.

There came an end to this attitude in the Borinage, the mining district in the South of Belgium where he had become a lay-preacher. He then had reached the limit — he had given his clothes and his bedding to others and he slept on the bare soil. At this point he realises that he can no longer do anything for others and his vision on life changes completely. He writes to his brother Theo that he no longer is a bird enclosed in his cage, living as a gentleman at large (a queer kind at that)! He can better be compared to a bird changing its plumes. For when he has acquired his new feathers he starts drawing. Having found this way of expressing himself, his letters now show a growing feeling of being able to raise himself out of his depressing surroundings.

He extricates himself from the many conventional sentiments he grew up with and which often clashed with his own inner feelings. The difference between teachings and experience had been the source of his inner turmoil which brought him to his extreme passiveness.

Then the spiritual dependence on his parents disappears and he becomes autonomous in his thinking. Through drawing he loosened the bonds which made him refrain from activity and his creative faculty started on the way which was to bring him so far. However the old never disappears altogether and Vincent retained the characteristic which is a specialty not only of many artists but also of other people, of putting themselves in the spot where the blows will fall. For the casual spectator he shows in his works in the first place the vision of the glow and glamor of an attractive world where a man can live in happiness, while he himself participates but slightly therein. He is a difficult person in his relations with others, specially with those who have opinions of



their own on matters artistic; this always made for violent discussions and disagreement. He finds his friends amongst plain people who have nothing to do with the world of art.

At any rate he enjoys the gladness of creating; he becomes conscious of his vision of what is beautiful in his surroundings. He tries to find out what is "the essential" thereof (which he puts into his paintings) i.e. mankind and human dignity. Creative capacity is not confined to artists only; it manifests itself in every kind of human labour (be it handicraft, technics, science, business, etc.). Vincent's life with turningpoint at the moment of the deepest depression, manifests its latent presence even during a period filled with movement in the opposite direction.

In works of art it is the maker's vision which appeals to the spectator; it may confirm or clarify sentiments of which he was perhaps already more or less aware. The greater the work of art, the more the artist's personality radiates in this way. Notwithstanding this, there is always a human difficulty that presents itself. The artist works from an inner urge and being a professional exhibitionist he puts his inner feelings before his public. However, he knows or feels consciously or unconsciously his own weaknesses and when working he is defending himself against them. Thus he fights his sentiments of destructiveness, anxiety, worries, sadism, etc., squaring himself against self-reproaches and so on. But he has to endure the critical attitude of his public and like everybody else, he tries to make a good impression on others. The best he can do is to hide his weaknesses or put them behind a veil or screen. Back of the screen are the weaknesses, before it their mask, in the form of beauty or otherwise. In a great work of art both are needed to provoke an emotion; if either the expression or the repression are left out the work becomes uninteresting. If the screen is very heavy the spectator cannot penetrate into the soul of the artist and compare it with his own. Such is the case with many paintings of olden times which were made on commission from those in authority: biblical representations, portraits, etc. At the best they result in glorious products of handicraft. The artist is not even permitted and does not try to express the features he does not like; one can see his own preference, for instance, when he depicts his wife or other members of his family for his own pleasure.

The situation is similar in a class of modern paintings qualified as realism of some sort or other. In many of these an outworldly sweetness of romanticism comes to the fore (or sadism or propaganda, etc.). What one does not see and cannot discover, is the human quality of the artist which is a condition for provoking emotion of an appreciative kind. Nor can one see the expression of the dignity of mankind which is more important than the illustration or the aesthetics.

If there would be no hiding of the personality of the artist behind the screen, the situation would be different but there would not yet be a respectable work of art. The human weaknesses are universal and fundamentally similar to all individuals. It may happen that by looking at a picture one discovers that the artist fails at the same points as oneself. This may be considered an excuse but one turns away because being told so is not very pleasant and one is more interested in fighting these influences than in being reminded of them. In many modern paintings, cubist, futuristic, abstract, tachist, etc., the screen is extremely transparent. One sees behind and through it anxiety, cunningness, destructiveness, etc., and one turns away. Perhaps one of the characteristics of our civilization is that one does not want to live permanently in a world of horrors, but fights them and rather shuns it as much as possible.

On the contrary, one looks in the first place for expressions of human dignity. What goes on behind the screen is basically alike for all individuals (and hence for all artists); what is in front is different for every person. Here the painter shows the weapons with which he defends himself against the turmoil within. Here he shows unconsciously as well as consciously how he would like to be a partner in the dignity of mankind and he tries to express the joy of life, its warmth, its attractions. If he loves what he

depicts this feeling will communicate itself to his public; if he appreciates what is around him the same. If the artist takes refuge from the visual reality of his surroundings because he is inwardly afraid of the world or of society, the spectator will not find much to appreciate; he will find but little of the human dignity he is looking for. It is the same if the painter realises his shortcomings (maybe only unconsciously) but does not really struggle to master them. The absence of the striving after human dignity cannot be outbalanced by any form of aesthetics.

If applied to Vincent's works we find his struggle behind the screen. It is as if he wants to say through his pictures: Look how marvellous the world is, without anxiety etc.; it could be a fine place to live in — let all worries alone.

July 1960

V. W. van Gogh

### **The life of Vincent van Gogh**

- |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1853 | Vincent was born at Groot-Zundert (Netherlands, in the Province of North-Brabant, near the Belgian Frontier) on March 30th, the eldest son of Theodorus van Gogh, a minister of the Gospel.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 1857 | Birth of his favorite brother, Theo (May 1st).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1869 | Enters the art firm of Goupil at The Hague on July 30th.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 1872 | Beginning of his life-long correspondence with Theo.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 1873 | Joins the Goupil-branch in London.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 1874 | Is transferred in October to the head-office of Goupil in Paris. Returns to London in December.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 1875 | Back to Goupil in Paris. He lives in complete isolation and devotes himself to a fanatical study of the Bible.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1876 | In March he gets his dismissal from Goupil. In April he obtains a situation as assistant teacher in a school at Ramsgate, England.<br>Subsequently he becomes assistant schoolmaster and curate at the Jones Methodist School at Isleworth (near London).                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 1877 | From January to April he is employed in a bookstore at Dordrecht, Holland. On May 9th he moves to Amsterdam to prepare himself for the study of theology at the University, wishing to become a minister like his father. He lodges with his uncle, a rear-admiral in command of the naval establishment.<br>Studying Latin and Greek for the entrance examination to the University does not give him satisfaction. In July 1878 he gives it up. |
| 1878 | In Brussels he takes a three months course in a school for missionaries. In November he starts as lay-evangelist in the Borinage, the colliery district in the South of Belgium, near the town of Mons. He proves to be bad at preaching, but to be a good nurse, full of sympathy for the workers and the people of his surroundings.                                                                                                            |
| 1879 | He is so impressed with the poverty around him that he gives away his clothes, etc.; because of his exaggerations he is dismissed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |



- 1880 In the summer he becomes aware of his calling as an artist. "I said to myself: I am taking up my pencil again, I am putting myself to drawing anew and since then everything for me has been changed," he writes to his brother.
- He makes sketches of the miners and makes his first copies after the works of J. F. Millet, the French painter of labourers on the land.
- "Millet is the one modern painter, who opens up a horizon for many", he writes.
- 1880-1881 From October to April he lives in Brussels. Theo starts to support him. He is befriended with the Dutch painter Van Rappard with whom he keeps up a correspondence afterwards. In April he returns to his parents at Etten (Netherlands, not far from Zundert, his birthplace).
- 1881-1883 At the end of 1881 he leaves for The Hague. He takes some lessons with the painter Anton Mauve (well-known, belonging to the so-called The Hague School), to whom he was related. Vincent specialized in drawing and began to paint. From September to November 1883 he goes to Drenthe, the province in the North-East of Holland. He feels very forlorn and returns to the home of his parents; his father was then minister at Nuenen (in the eastern part of the province of North Brabant).
- 1883-1885 The people working on the land have his special interest. He paints them and their surroundings and he produces an endless number of drawings and sketches. This culminates in some fifty odd painted portraits as studies for the great painting "The potatoe-eaters".
- 1885-1886 After the sudden death of his father in the spring of 1885 he leaves in November for Antwerp, where he becomes a pupil of the Academy. As he is looked upon by his professor as not knowing how to draw he is put back to the preparatory class. He studies Rubens, the great Flemish painter, at the museum and learns from him how to brighten the color of his portraits.
- 1886-1888 In February he starts for Paris, where he lives with Theo. He works for a short while at the Atelier Cormon, where he becomes acquainted with the painters Toulouse Lautrec and Emile Bernard. He makes contact with the impressionists; this completely clears his palette though he does not follow them in their ways.
- 1888 Disgusted with the big city and longing for the country he leaves Paris for Arles (in the South of France, on the river Rhône near its mouth) on February 21st. He is deeply impressed by the light and the glowing colors of Provence. In June he visits les Saintes-Maries de la Mer, a small village on the Mediterranean near by.
- The first summer at Arles he paints some of his best known paintings, e.g. the Sunflowers, the Harvest, the Berceuse etc. In October the painter Gauguin comes to Arles. Two months of joint working under the same roof ends in a quarrel; Gauguin leaves.
- 1889 His mental state causes Vincent to take up voluntarily his residence in the Asylum of St. Paul at St. Rémy, also in Provence. He continues to paint when he feels equal to it, sometimes in his room sometimes in the open, either in the park or outside.
- 1890 In January the well-known monthly "Mercure de France" publishes the first enthusiastic article on the work of Vincent van Gogh, written by Albert Aurier, the art critic.
- In the spring Vincent feels better and on May 18th travels to Paris to visit Theo, who has married. He meets his friends again. On May 21st he leaves for Auvers-sur-Oise, an hour to the North-West of Paris. Pissarro, the impressionist painter, had recommended him to contact Dr. Gachet, a doctor who had been a friend to many painters. At Auvers Vincent continued painting. The 27th of July he attempted to end his life; he died the 29th. Half a year later, January 21st, Theo died. They rest next to each-other in the cemetery of Auvers-sur-Oise.

### The Hague

**Young girl in a wood** 1  
sept. 1882, 15,5 × 23

**A fisherwoman on the beach** 2  
aug. 1883, canvas on wood, 13,5 × 20,5

### Nuenen

**The loom** 3  
may 1884, 27,5 × 33,5

**The ox-cart** 4  
july 1884, canvas on wood, 22,5 × 32,5

**Peasant sitting at table** 5  
march 1885, 13 × 17,5

**Sheaves of wheat** 6  
summer 1885, 12 × 16

**Two peasant women digging potatoes** 7  
sept. 1885, canvas on wood, 12,5 × 17

**Three bird's nests** 8  
sept.-oct. 1885, 13 × 16,5 Vincent

**Still life with apples and two pumpkins** 9  
sept.-oct. 1885, 23 × 33,5

**Sunset** 10  
oct.-nov. 1885, 13 × 18

**Autumn-landscape with four trees** 11  
nov. 1885, 25 × 35

**The potato-eaters** 12  
1885, 32 × 45

**A labourer's cottage** 13  
1885, 26 × 31,5

**The old tower at Nuenen** 14  
1885, 25,5 × 31,5

**Head of a Brabant woman in white cap** 15  
1885, 13,5 × 17

**Basket with potatoes** 16  
1885, 17,5 × 24

**The open bible** 17  
1885, 26 × 31

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1885, 13,5 × 17,5

**Portrait of a woman, blue background** 19  
1885, 15 × 18

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1886, 15 × 18

**Still life with basket, fruit, meat and a roll of bread** 21  
1886, 18 × 21,5

**Still life with a plaster statuette** 22  
1887, 18 × 21,5

**Sunflowers** 23  
1887, 23,5 × 39,5

**Interior of a restaurant** 24  
1887, 18 × 22

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1887, 21 × 25,5 b.l. à l'ami Lucien Pissarro, Vincent

**Shoes with laces** 26  
1886, 15 × 18

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1887, 14 × 26

**View over Paris from Montmartre** 28  
1887, 32 × 39,5

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1887, 30 × 44,5

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1887, 18 × 24

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1887, 14,5 × 17,5

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1888, 18 × 22



**"Romans Parisiens" 34**  
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1888, 20 × 26

**The crab 36**  
1888, 15 × 18,5

#### Arles

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june 1888, 29 × 36,5 b.r. Vincent

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june 1888, 21 × 25

**The sower 39**  
summer 1888, 25 × 31,5 b.l. Vincent

**Café-terrace at night, place du Forum 40**  
sept. 1888, 26 × 32

**The vineyard "La vigne verte" 41**  
oct. 1888, 28,5 × 36

**"La petite Arlésienne" 42**  
1888, canvas, 19 × 20

**Willows at sunset 43**  
oct. 1888, canvas on paper, 12,5 × 13,5

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on chair: Vincent, on the right "La Berceuse"

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1888, 23,5 × 32

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1888, 23,5 × 32

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1888, 26 × 32,5

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1888, 9,5 × 14

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**Gauguin's chair 56**  
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**Weaver in the loom** 100  
pen and ink, watercolor, black chalk, 9,5 × 11,5

**Peasant woman peeling potatoes by the fire** 101  
black chalk, charcoal, 22,5 × 31

**Woman chopping, facing left** 102  
black chalk, 14 × 16, b.r. Vincent

**Sketch of a peasant working, facing right** 103  
black chalk, 8 × 14

**Woman scouring pots** 104  
black chalk, 17 × 21, b.r. Vincent

**Peasant walking** 105  
black chalk, 7,5 × 13,5

**Peasant walking to the left** 106  
black chalk, 8 × 14

**Study of an auction near Nuenen** 107  
may 1885, black chalk, 8 × 14

**Portrait of a woman with lace cap** 108  
pen and ink (washed), 5 × 8

**Peasant woman binding sheaves of wheat** 109  
black chalk, (washed), 18 × 13

**Peasant and peasant woman digging** 110  
watercolor, black chalk, 8 × 13

**Peasant reaping, seen on the back** 111  
black chalk, 16,5 × 23

**The garden of the parsonage in winter** 112  
1884, pen and pencil, 15,5 × 21

**The road with poplars** 113  
1885, pen and ink, pencil, 15,5 × 21

**Three hands, two holding a fork** 114  
(sketch for the potato-eaters)  
black crayon, 8 × 13

**Antwerp**

**"Het Steen" in Antwerp** 115  
dec. 1885, black and colored crayon, 5 × 8

**The ballroom** 116  
dec. 1885, black and colored crayon, 4 × 6,5

**Paris**

**Young girl nude** 117  
charcoal, 19 × 29

**The window of the restaurant "Bataille"** 118  
1886, pen and colored crayon, 15,5 × 21

**Boulevard de Clichy** 119  
1887, pen and colored crayon, 15 × 20,5

**Yacht on the Seine (Asnières)** 120  
1887, pencil, 15,5 × 27

**The road along the fortifications** 121  
1887, watercolor, crayon and pencil, 15,5 × 20,5

**The gate with the flag** 122  
1887, watercolor, pen and ink, heightened with white, 9,5 × 12

**Arles**

**The ruins of Mont-Majour** 123  
may 1888, violet ink and black crayon, 12 × 19

**La Crau, seen from Mont-Majour** 124  
may 1888, pen, ink and black crayon, 19 × 24

**Barns at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer** 125  
1888, reed-pen, 12 × 18,5

**The rock, (Mont-Majour)** 126  
1888, reed-pen and ink, 19,5 × 21

**Two bushes behind a fence** 127  
1888, pen and reed-pen, 9,5 × 12,5

**Railway vans and roadway** 128  
1888, pen and ink, 9,5 × 12,5

**Farm in the field with sun 129**  
1888, reed-pen, pen and ink, 10 × 14

**Saint-Rémy**

**The stone bench in the garden and ivy 130**  
1889, ink and pencil, 18,5 × 24,5

**The fountain in the hospital garden 131**  
1889, pen and ink, 18 × 19,5

**The Alpilles, seen from the hospital 132**  
1889, pen and reed-pen, 18,5 × 24,5

**Three men with spade on the shoulder 133**  
1889, pencil, 9,5 × 12,5

**The window with bottles 134**  
1889, watercolor, 18,5 × 24

**Feather-hyacinth 135**  
1890, reed-pen and pencil, 12 × 16

**Arum-lilies 136**  
1890, reed-pen and pen, 12 × 16

**Auvers-sur-Oise**

**Mlle Gachet at the piano 137**  
1890, black crayon on pink paper, 7,5 × 12

**The townhall of Auvers 138**  
1890, black crayon, 9,5 × 12

**Sheaves of wheat 139**  
1890, black crayon, ink and brush, 18,5 × 25

**The yard with peasant woman and chicken 140**  
1890, watercolor and pencil, heightened with white, 17,5 × 21







